

# ***Garland County Marriage Policy***

The Garland Marriage Policy <sup>TM</sup> is part of a national movement inspired and developed by Mike McManus and Marriage Savers, Inc., 9500 Michael's Court, Bethesda, Maryland 20817.

## ***Preamble***

Our desire is to promote lasting marriages under God and to establish spiritually healthy families. We believe God created marriage for the full expression of love between one man and one woman, for the stable existence of human society and for the birth and nurture of children. Marriage is a holy and sacred relationship.

We are deeply troubled by our country's epidemic of marital instability and divorce and feel it must be directly addressed by the Christian community. All divorces in Garland County are a matter of serious concern to us, especially since many of these marriages were performed in our churches.

While many churches have long provided meaningful preparation and support for marriage, the current divorce rate makes it clear that a coordinated and more effective effort is required. We accept the responsibility to raise the level of commitment in those we marry and those married couples who look to us for spiritual instruction.

It is not our purpose or desire to condemn or judge anyone who has experienced a divorce. Our hope is to improve the quality of new and existing marriages in Garland County to the point that we radically reduce, if not eliminate, divorce, at least among those choosing to be married in our churches.

While respecting our varying church traditions, we recognize the need for a strong united voice to express this concern to our community and culture. In setting forth common minimal guidelines for marriage preparation and support of existing marriages, we do not want to limit or dictate to any congregation its methods for addressing this concern. Rather we affirm our intention to develop and use methods of ministry, which are consistent with our own traditions as an array of alternatives toward one common goal – strong, Christ-centered marriages and families.

Therefore, as servants of God, acting on His word, we believe it is our responsibility to encourage engaged couples to set aside time for marriage preparation and for married couples to work for marriage preservation. We acknowledge that a wedding is but a day, while a marriage is for a lifetime.

What God has joined together, let the faith community of Garland County seek to hold together.

***Therefore before conducting a marriage, we will normally:***

1. encourage a minimum of four months marriage preparation and encourage courtship periods of one year;
2. require the engaged couple to take a premarital inventory;
3. require the engaged couple to be mentored by an older solidly married couple;
4. require the engaged couples to be celibate and live separately;
5. offer post-marital sessions with a mentor couple within the first year of marriage.

***Therefore to strengthen existing marriages, we will:***

6. provide resources and encouragement for married couples to enrich and strengthen their marriages.
7. create a support system of couples whose marriages have successfully weathered life's challenges to assist with troubled marriages.
8. seek to establish support systems for blended families.

We will cooperate with other congregations and organizations to share resources and create a positive climate in which marriages are helped to succeed. We will seek independent evaluations from time to time to measure the effectiveness of our efforts in encouraging marriage and discouraging divorce.

***Covenant:***

I commit to seek the endorsement of these minimum standards by my congregation and to encourage others to do so, for the Glory of God and the good of our whole community.

Church \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_